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Remarks Civil Rights Cloture

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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March 10, 1960

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REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

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Mr. President:

I shall be brief for I have no wish to add unduly to the burdens of historians of the future who will have to trace, through mountains of words, the evolution from the constitutional principle of equal rights and responsibilities for all Americans to the full practice of this principle.

This Congress is going to advance or retard that evolutionary process by the manner in which we dispose of the issue now before us. I want the process advanced and I want it advanced in the most expeditious manner possible. For that reason, I shall vote against cloture.

The issue is not partisan. There are Republicans and Democrats who want to invoke cloture now. There are Republicans and Democrats who oppose invoking ^{it} at any time. There are Republicans and Democrats who oppose invoking it now, at this point in the debate. The Majority Leader and the Minority Leader are among those who are so opposed. Why? Because they are against civil rights legislation? No, Mr. President, because they are dealers in realities. They know that this is the wrong time, the wrong issue, the wrong circumstances. The reason is a simple and uncomplicated one: The votes are not there, neither the democratic votes nor the republican votes, nor a combination of democratic-republican votes.

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Let those who must make their case, proponents no less than opponents. When they have done with it we shall get a bill which reflects the realities of the situation, which advances civil rights as far as it is within the capabilities of the Congress at this time to advance them. It will be, I trust, a bill worthy of the hopes of those whose rights are in need of protection, a bill which produces changes, but changes within the capacity of adjustment of those who most deeply fear the changes which are involved, a bill which will reflect the dedication of those who have spent sleepless night after sleepless night here in the Senate in an effort to enlarge something more than the Congressional Record in an effort to bring about a greater equality of rights among all Americans.